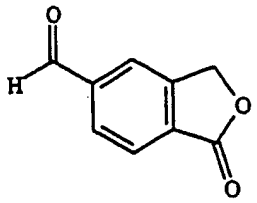
III. Amendments to the Claims

1) (Original) A process for the preparation of citalopram which comprises:

(a) treating 5-formylphthalide of formula



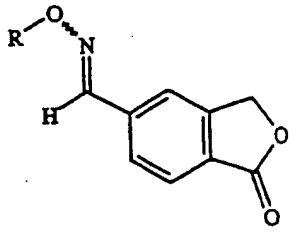
(I)

with a hydroxylamine of formula

$R\text{-}O\text{-}NH_2$ (II)

wherein R represents a hydrogen atom (IIa) or a substituent R' inert under the conditions of a Grignard reaction (IIb);

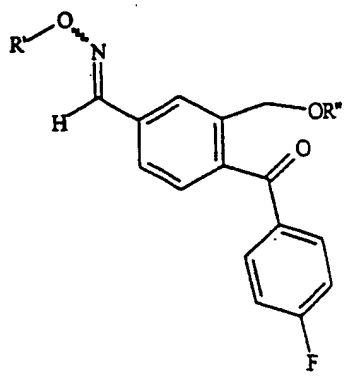
(b) reacting the oxime thus obtained of formula



(III)

wherein R is as defined above, with a 4-fluorophenylmagnesium halide, straightforwardly when R=R' (IIIb) or after substitution of R by R' when R=H (IIIa);

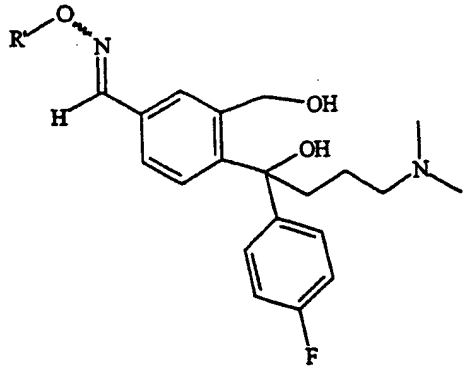
(c) reacting the intermediate ketone of formula



(IV)

wherein R' is as defined above and R" represents MgHal (IVa) wherein Hal is halogen, or hydrogen (IVb), with a [3-(dimethylamino)propyl]magnesium halide;

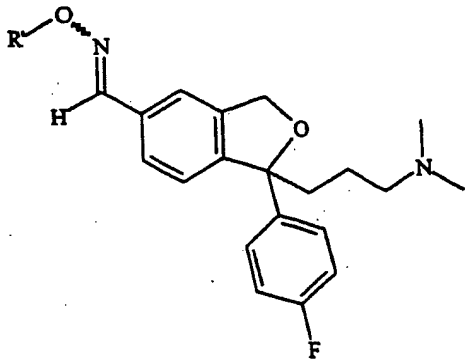
(d) cyclizing the intermediate diol of formula



(V)

wherein R' is as defined above; and

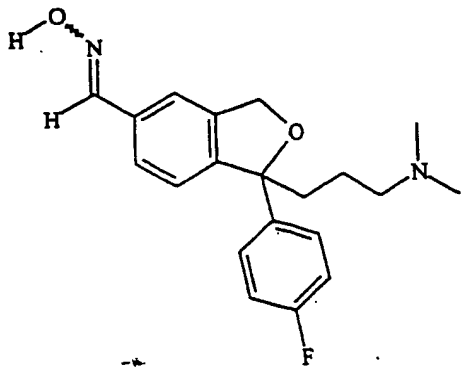
(e) removing the group R' of the substituted oxime of formula



(VI)

wherein R' is as defined above;

(f) converting the unsubstituted oxyamino group of the oxime of formula



(VII)

into nitrile to give citalopram (A) or one of its pharmaceutical acceptable salts; or

(e') optionally, when R' is triphenylmethyl or diphenylmethyl, straightforwardly converting the substituted oxyamino group of the oxime of formula VI into nitrile by treatment with a mixed anhydride of formula

H-CO-O-CO-R''' (VIII)

wherein R''' represents a C_1-C_6 alkyl group, an aralkyl group or an aryl group, to give citalopram (A) or a pharmaceutical acceptable salt thereof.

2) (Original) The process according to claim 1, wherein R' is (C_1-C_6)alkyl, (C_1-C_3)alcoxy(C_2-C_4)alkyl, a benzyl, diphenylmethyl or triphenylmethyl group, unsubstituted or substituted on the benzene rings with one or more groups independently chosen among (C_1-C_6 alkyl, (C_1-C_3)alcoxy and nitro groups or with a 2,3- or 3,4-methylenedioxy group.

3) (Original) A process according to claim 2 wherein R' is triphenylmethyl or diphenylmethyl.

4) (Original) A process according to claim 1 wherein said 4-fluorophenylmagnesium halide is the bromide.

5) **(Original)** A process according to claim 1 wherein said [3-(dimethylamino)propyl]magnesium halide is the chloride.

6) **(Original)** A process according to claim 1 wherein step (d) is carried out in the presence of a halide of an alkyl- or arylsulfonic acid.

7) **(Original)** A process according to claim 6 wherein said halide of an alkyl- or arylsulfonic acid is methanesulfonyl chloride.

8) **(Original)** A process according to claim 1 wherein R' represents triphenylmethyl or diphenylmethyl and the intermediate of formula VI is straightforwardly converted to citalopram according to step (e').

9) **(Original)** A process according to claim 8 wherein in said anhydride of formula VIII R''' represents (C_1-C_4) alkyl, benzyl or phenyl.

10) **(Original)** A process according to claim 9 wherein R''' represents methyl.

11) **(Original)** A process according to claim 10 wherein said anhydride of formula VIII is used in admixture with acetic acid.

12) **(Original)** A process according to claim 11 wherein said mixture is prepared from formic acid and acetic anhydride in a molar ratio of 1:1.25.

13) **(Original)** A process according to claim 1 wherein said compound of formula VIII is used in 1.25 moles per mole of compound of formula VI.

14) (Original) A process according to claim 1 wherein citalopram is isolated in the form of hydrobromide.

15) (Withdrawn) A compound of formula III, wherein R represents hydrogen or a substituent R' inert under the conditions of a Grignard reaction.

16) (Withdrawn) A compound according to claim 15 wherein R represents a substituent R' selected between triphenylmethyl and diphenylmethyl.

17) (Withdrawn) A compound of formula N wherein R' represents hydrogen or a substituent inert under the conditions of a Grignard reaction and R" represents MgHal (IVa), wherein Hal is halogen, or hydrogen.

18) (Withdrawn) A compound according to claim 17 wherein R' is triphenylmethyl or diphenylmethyl.

19) (Withdrawn) A compound of formula V wherein R' represents hydrogen or a substituent inert under the conditions of a Grignard reaction.

20) (Withdrawn) A compound according to claim 19 wherein R' is triphenylmethyl or diphenylmethyl.

21) (Withdrawn) A compound of formula VI wherein R' represents a substituent inert under the conditions of a Grignard reaction, other than methyl.

22) (Withdrawn) A compound according to claim 21 wherein R' is triphenylmethyl or diphenylmethyl

23) (Withdrawn) Use of the compounds of formula III, IV, V and VI as intermediates for the preparation of citalopram.

24) (Withdrawn) A process for preparing citalopram, according to claim 1, as a single enantiomer characterized in that the corresponding isolated enantiomers of the compounds of formula V or VI are used as intermediates.

25) (Withdrawn) A process according to claim 24, characterized in that the isolated enantiomers of compounds of formula V or VI are prepared by resolution of the corresponding racemic mixtures with optically active acids, preferably with tartaric or camphosulfonic acid.

26) (Withdrawn) A compound according to claims 19 to 22 as a single enantiomer.